

SUBJECT: GENERAL JOSE GUILLERMO ((GARCIA)) MERINO

A. JOSE GUILLERMO ((GARCIA)) MERINO WAS BORN 25 JUNE 1933 IN SAN VICENTE, EL SALVADOR. HE WAS FROM A LOWER TO LOWER-MIDDLE CLASS FAMILY AND ATTENDED THE INSTITUTO SANTO TOMAS, A SECONDARY SCHOOL IN HIS HOME TOWN. IN 1953 HE ENTERED THE MILITARY ACADEMY, WHERE HE STUDIED LIBERAL ARTS AND MILITARY SCIENCE. WHILE IN SCHOOL, HE HAD FEW FRIENDS, ALTHOUGH HE DID DEVELOP A STRONG SENSE OF LOYALTY TO THE MILITARY. AFTER HIS GRADUATION, HE HELD MOSTLY ADMINISTRATIVE POSTS. FROM 1974 TO 1977, HE WAS PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS AGENCY (ANTEL) A PRESTIGIOUS POST ALWAYS FILLED BY THE MILITARY. IN 1977, GARCIA EXPECTED TO BE DESIGNATED AS PRESIDENT; INSTEAD HIS FELLOW OFFICERS CHOSE GENERAL CARLOS ((ROMERO)) AND GARCIA BELIEVED THAT HE WAS SIDELINED BECAUSE OF HIS REPUTATION FOR HONESTY AND INTEGRITY. IN 1978, ROMERO APPOINTED HIM MILITARY COMMANDER OF SAN VICENTE, A FORM OF INTERNAL EXILE, BECAUSE OF GARCIA'S INVOLVEMENT IN AMPLOTATO OVERTHROW THE PRESIDENT.

B. ON 27 FEBRUARY 1979.

REPORTED COLONELS ANTONIO (GONZALEZ) ELIZONDO, JUSE GUILLERAD
GARCIA AND FORMER ARMY COLONEL JUAN ANTONIO ((MARTINEZ)) WERE
INVOLVED IN A COUP PLOT AGAINST PRESIDENT ROMERO. ON 15 FEBRUARY
1979, FORMER ARMY GENERAL JOSE ALBERTO ((MEDRANO)),

WAS
CALLED TO THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE. MEDNANO TOLD FRESIDENT ROMERO
THAT THE DIFFERENCE GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE TO BE CHANGED, AND
COULD BE ACCOUNTED BY REPLACING THE RANKING MINISTERS.

C. ON 5 OCTOBER 1979 PRESIDENT ROMERO INDIVIDUALLY CONTACTED COLONELS JOSE EUGENIO VIDES CASANOVA, JAIME ABDUL GUITERREZ AND JOSE GUILLERMO GARCIA, AND PERSONALLY ACCUSED THEM OF BEING INVOLVED IN A COUP PLOT. EACH DENIED THE ACCUSATION.

ON 30 MAY 1979 SEVERAL MAJORS OF THE 1963 HILITARY CLASS AND VIDES, GUITERREZ AND GARCIA HELD INFORMAL CONVERSATIONS IN WHICH THEY REACHED AN AGREEMENT TO POOL MILITARY RESOURCES IN PLANNING A POSSIBLE COUP AGAINST PRESIDENT ROMERO.

D. IN OCTOBER 1979, GARCIA HELPED PLAN THE COUP THAT TOPPLED THE ROMERO REGIME AND INSTEAD OF SEEKING A SEAT ON THE JUNTA, FORMED TO RULE THE COUNTRY, HE CHOSE TO BECOME MINISTER OF DEFENSE, WHERE HE GAINED OPERATIONAL CONTROL OF THE ARMED FORCES AND BECAME, IN EFFECT, THE POWER BEHIND THE THRONE AND WAS FREE TO PURSUE HIS FOREMOST GOAL-~PRESERVING THE COHESION OF THE ARMED

Approved for Release

NOV 1993

- THE RELEASED POLITICAL CHARGONIRS INSTITUTED USE OF NONLETHAL RIGHT CONTROL WEAPONS, AND REMOVED FROM THEIR COMMANDS A FEW RIGHT-WING MILITARY AND POLICE OFFICERS ASSOCIATED WITH DEATH SQUADS. HOWEVER, HE TOLERATED THE CONTINUES EXISTENCE OF DEATH SQUADS AND, IN JANUARY 1981 RENEGED ON PROMISES TO LIMIT THEM (NFI). TO A STANDARD CONTRAGGING AND CON
- E. GARCIA WAS A SMART, SHREWD INDIVIDUAL, WHOSE PUBLIC PERSONA WAS COOL AND RESERVED. HE EXHIBITED A SUBSTANTIAL DEGREE OF EMOTIONAL CONTROL, KEPT HIS PERSONAL AMBITIONS AND FEELINGS WELL CONCEALED AND HAD A SUBTLE SENSE OF HUMOR WHICH HE OFTEN USED TO INFLUENCE OTHERS.

 EMARKED THAT, IN CONFERENCES, GARCIA EMPLOYED "MULTIPLE ENTENDRE", CONVEYING SEVERAL LEVELS OF MEANING TO HIS AUDIENCE. HE APPEARED TO HAVE A SELF-RIGHTEOUS STREAK, A SENSE OF SUPERIORITY, AND PROBABLY HAD A CAPACITY FOR VINDICTIVENESS, EVEN CRUELTY, TOWARD THOSE WHO WOULD THWART HIS PLANS AND OBJECTIVES. GARCIA WAS ADEPT IN PERSUADING OTHERS TO ACCEPT HIS POINT OF VIEW, AND APPEARED TO MOTIVATE AND CONTROL THROUGH APPEALS OF REASON RATHER THAN EMOTION. HE OFTEN USED HIS SENSE OF HUMOR TO HELP INFLUENCE OTHERS. HE TENDED TO VIEW PEOPLE AS COMPONENTS OF THE ENVIRONMENT TO BE ORGANIZED.

 MANIPULATED, AND EVENUTALLY CONTROLLED.
- F. GARCIA AND HIS WIFE WERE PRACTICING ROMAN CATHOLICS AND HAVE FIVE CHILDREN. HE HAD STRONG FAMILY VALUES AND PROFESSED TO ADHERE TO TRADITIONAL VALUES OF THE CHURCH. IN 1981 HE TRAVELET TO THE U.S. TO ATTEND HIS DAUGHTER'S WEDDING.
- G. IN APRIL 1983 GARCIA WAS FORCED TO STEP DOWN FROM HIS POSITION AS MOD BECAUSE OF THREATS FROM THE EL SALVADOR AIR FORCE TO DEFY THE HIGH COMMAND AND OPERATE INDEPENDENTLY. THEIR COMPLAINTS WERE THAT GARCIA ISOLATED HIMSELF FROM THE MILITARY COMMANDERS, MADE DECISIONS ON POLITICAL AND MILITARY MATTERS WITHOUT CONSULTING THEM, SUPPORTED INCOMPETENT OFFICERS WHO HELD IMPORTANT POSITIONS AND WHOSE PERSONAL REPUTATIONS TARNISHED THE IMAGE OF THE ARMED FORCES, AND GARCIA'S OPPOSITION TO ARENA. GARCIA TRIED TO IMPLEMENT REFORMS WHICH ROBERTO ((D'AUBUISSON)), PRESIDENT OF ARENA TRIED TO STALL OR MODIFY.
- 2. THERE IS NO INFORMATION AVAILABLE INDICATING GARCIA ORDERED AN ATTACK ON ARENA HEADQUARTERS OR ORDERED THE KIDNAPPING OF MEMBERS OF ARENA'S PARAMILITARY GROUP, NOR DO WE HAVE ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON HIS ALLEGED INVOLVEMENT IN RIGHT WING DEATH SQUAD OR EXTREME RIGHTIST ACTIVITIES.